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# The California Indians

A Clever Satire on the Governments dealings with its Indian Wards

*Written By*

J. ROSS BROWNE
of the Revenue Service in the late 50's

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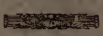

The International Encyclopedia says of Mr. owne: "He was born in Ireland in 1817, but en a child, emigrated with his parents to Ken- ky. At the age of 18 he went down the Mis- ippi on a flatboat and for some time was re- ter of the Louisiana Senate. Next he shipped a whaler and upon his return published a k on Zanibar. He was for a time in the enue service in California, where he reported sessions of the first state constitutional con- tion." He was Minister to China in 1868- In 1869 he made an elaborate report on the esources of the Pacific Slope." He died in 5.

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# THE INDIANS OF CALIFORNIA

When the State of California was admitted into the Union, the number of Indians within its borders was estimated at one hundred thousand. Of these, some five or six thousand, residing in the vicinity of the Missions, were partially civilized, and subsisted chiefly by begging and stealing. A few of the better class contrived to avoid starvation by casual labor in the vineyards and on the farms of the settlers. They were very poor and very corrupt, given to gambling, drinking, and other vices prevailing among white men, and to which Indians have a natural inclination. As the country became more settled, it was considered profitable, owing to the high rate of compensation for white labor, to encourage these Christian tribes to adopt habits of industry, and they were employed very generally throughout the state. In the vine-growing districts they were usually paid in native brandy every Saturday night, put in jail next morning, for getting drunk, and bailed out on Monday to work out the fine imposed upon them by the local authorities. This system still prevails in Los Angeles, where I have often seen a dozen of these miserable wretches carried to jail roaring drunk of a Sunday morning. The inhabitants of Los Angeles are a moral and intelligent people and many of them disapprove of the custom on principle, and hope it will be abolished as soon as the Indians are all killed off. Practically, it is not a bad way of bettering their condition; for some of them die every week from the effects of debauchery, or kill one another in the nocturnal brawls which prevail in the outskirts of the Pueblo.

The settlers in the northern portions of the state had a still more effectual method of encouraging the Indians to adopt habits of civilization. In general, they engaged them at a fixed rate of wages to cultivate the ground, and during the season of labor fed them on beans, and gave them a blanket or a shirt each; after which, when the harvest was secured, the account was considered squared, and the Indians were driven off to forage in the woods for themselves and families during the winter. Starvation usually wound up a considerable number of the old and decrepit ones every season; and of those that failed to perish from hunger or exposure, some were killed on the general principle that they must have subsisted by stealing cattle, for it was well known that cattle ranged in the vicinity, while others were not unfrequently slaughtered by their employers for helping themselves to the refuse portions of the crop which had been left in the ground. It may be said

that these were exceptions to the general rule; but if ever an Indian was fully and honestly paid for his labor by a white settler, it was not my luck to hear of it; certainly it could not have been of frequent occurrence.

The wild Indians inhabiting the Coast Range, the valley of the Sacramento and San Joaquin, and the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, became troublesome at a very early period after the discovery of the gold mines. It was found convenient to take possession of their country without recompense, rob them of their wives and children, kill them in every cowadly and barbarous manner that could be devised, and when that was impracticable, drive them as far as possible out of the way. Such treatment was not consistent with their rude ideas of justice. At best they were an ignorant race of Diggers, wholly unacquainted with our enlightened institutions. They could not understand why they should be murdered, robbed, and hunted down in this way, without any other pretense of provocation than the color of their skin and the habits of life to which they had always been accustomed. In the traditionary researches of their most learned sages they had never heard of the snakes in Ireland that were exterminated for the public benefit by the great and good St. Patrick. They were utterly ignorant of the sublime doctrine of General Welfare. The idea, strange as it may appear, never occurred to them that they were suffering for the great cause of civilization, which, in the natural course of things, must exterminate Indians. Actuated by base motives of resentment, a few of them occasionally rallied, preferring rather to die than submit to these imaginary wrongs. White men were killed from time to time; cattle were driven off; horses were stolen, and various other iniquitous offenses were committed.

The federal government, as is usual in cases where the lives of valuable voters are at stake, was forced to interfere. Troops were sent out to aid the settlers in slaughtering the Indians. By means of mounted howitzers, muskets, Minie rifles, dragoon pistols, and sabres, a good many were cut to pieces. But, on the whole, the general policy of the government was pacific. It was not designed to kill any moreIndians than might be necessary to secure the adhesion of the honest yeomanry of the state, and thus furnish an example of the practical working of our political system to the savages of the forest, by which it was hoped they might profit. Congress took the matter in hand an an early day, and appropriated large sums of money for the purchase of cattle and agricultural implements. From the wording of the law, it would appear that these useful articles were designed for the relief and maintenance of the Indians. Commissioners were appointed at

handsome salaries to treat with them, and sub-agents employed to superintend the distribution of the purchases. In virtue of this munificent policy, treaties were made in which the various tribes were promised a great many valuable presents, which of course they never got. There was no reason to suppose they ever should; it being a fixed principle with strong powers never to ratify treaties made by their own agents with weaker ones, when there is money to pay and nothing to be had in return.

The cattle were purchased, however, to the number of many thousands. Here arose another difficulty. The honest miners must have something to eat, and what could they have more nourishing than fat cattle? Good beef has been a favorite article of subsistence with men of bone and muscle ever since the days of the ancient Romans. So the cattle, or the greater part of them, were driven up to the mines, and sold at satisfactory rates,—probably for the benefit of the Indians, though I never could understand in what way their necessities were relieved by this speculation, unless it might be that the parties interested turned over to them the funds received for the cattle. It is very certain they continued to starve and commit depredations in the most ungrateful manner for some time after; and, indeed, to such a pitch of audacity did they carry their rebellious spirit against the constituted authorities, that many of the chiefs protested if the white people would only let them alone, and give them the least possible chance to make a living, they would esteem it a much greater favor than any relief they had experienced from the munificent donations of Congress.

But government was not to be defeated in its benevolent intentions. Voluminous reports were made to Congress, showing that a general reservation system, on the plan so successfully pursued by the Spanish missionaries, would best accomplish the object. It was known that the Missions of California had been built chiefly by Indian labor; that during their existence the priests had fully demonstrated the capacity of this race for the acquisition of civilized habits; that extensive vineyards and large tracts of land had been cultivated solely by Indian labor, under their instruction; and that by this humane system of teaching many hostile tribes had been subdued, and enabled not only to support themselves but to render the Missions highly profitable establishments.

No aid was given by government beyond the grants of land necessary for missionary purposes; yet they soon grew wealthy, owned immense herds of cattle, supplied agricultural products to the rancheros, and carried on a considerable trade in hides and tallow with the United States. If the Spanish

priests could do this without arms or assistance, in the midst of a savage country, at a period when the Indians were more numerous and more powerful than they are now, surely it could be done in a comparatively civilized country by intelligent Americans, with all the lights of experience and the cooperation of a beneficent government.

At least Congress thought so; and in 1853 laws were passed for the establishment of a reservation system in California, and large appropriations were made to carry it into effect. Tracts of land of twenty-five thousand acres were ordered to be set apart for the use of the Indians; officers were appointed to supervise the affairs of the service; clothing, cattle, seeds, and agricultural implements were purchased; and a general invitation was extended to the various tribes to come in and learn how to work like white men. The first reservation was established at the Tejon, a beautiful and fertile valley in the southern part of the state. Headquarters for the employes, and large granaries for the crops, were erected. The Indians were feasted on cattle, and everything promised favorably. True, it cost a great deal to get started, about $250,000; but a considerable crop was raised, and there was every reason to hope that the experiment would prove successful. In the course of time other reservations were established, one in the foothills of the Sacramento Valley, at a place called Nome Lackee; one at the mouth of the Noyo River, south of Cape Mendocino; one on the Klamath, below Crescent City; besides which, there were Indian farms, or adjuncts, of these reservations at the Fresno, Nome Cult or Round Valley, the Mattole Valley, near Cape Mendocino, and other points where it was deemed advisable to give aid and instruction to the Indians. The cost of these establishments was such as to justify the most sanguine anticipations of their success.

In order that the appropriations might be devoted to their legitimate purpose, and the greatest possible amount of instruction furnished at the least expense, the Executive Department adopted the policy of selecting officers experienced in the art of public speaking, and thoroughly acquainted with the prevailing systems of primary elections. A similar policy has been found to operate beneficially in the case of Collectors of Customs, and there was no reason why it should not in other branches of the public service. Gentlemen skilled in the tactics of State Legislatures and capable of influencing those refractory bodies by the exercise of moral suasion, could be relied upon to deal with the Indians, who are not so far advanced in the arts of civilization, and whose necessities, in a pecuniary point of view, are not usually so urgent. Besides, it was known that the Digg

tribes were exceedingly ignorant of our political institutions, and required more instruction, perhaps, in this branch of knowledge than in any other. The most intelligent of the chiefs actually had no more idea of the respective merits of the great candidates for senatorial honors in California than if those distinguished gentlemen had never been born. As to primary meeting and caucuses, the poor Diggers, in their simplicity, were just as apt to mistake them for some favorite game of thimblerig or pitch-penny as for the practical exercise of the great system of free suffrage. They could not make out why men should drink so much whisky and swear so hard unless they were gambling; and if any farther proof was necessary, it was plain to see that the game was one of hazard, because the players were constantly whispering to each other, and passing money from hand to hand, and from pocket to pocket. The only difference they could see between the different parties was that some had more money than others, but they had no idea where it came from.

To enlighten them on all these points was, doubtless, the object of the great appointing powers in selecting good political speakers to preside over them. After building their houses, it was presumed that there would be plenty of stumps left in the woods from which they could be taught to make speeches on the great questions of the day, and where a gratifying scene might be witnessed, at no remote period, of big and little Diggers holding forth from every stump in support of the presiding administration. For men who possessed an extraordinary capacity for drinking ardent spirits; who could number among their select friends the most notorious vagrants and gamblers in the state; who spent their days in idleness and their nights in brawling grogshops; whose habits, in short, were in every way disreputable, the authorities in Washington entertained a very profound antipathy. I know this to be the case, because the most stringent regulations were established prohibiting persons in the service from getting drunk, and official orders written warning them that they would be promptly removed in case of any misconduct. Circular letters were also issued and posted up at the different reservations, forbidding the employes to adopt the wives of the Indians, which it was supposed they might attempt to do from too zealous a disposition to cultivate friendly relations with both sexes. In support of this policy, the California delegation made it a point never to indorse any person for office in the service who was not considered peculiarly deserving of patronage. They knew exactly the kind of men that were wanted, because they lived in the state and had read about the Indians in the newspapers. Some of them had even visited a few of the wigwams.

Having the public welfare at heart—a fact that can not be doubted, since they repeatedly asserted it in their speeches—they saw where the great difficulty lay, and did all in their power to aid the executive. They indorsed the very best friends they had—gentlemen who had contributed to their election, and fought for them through thick and thin. The capacity of such persons for conducting the affairs of a reservation could not be doubted. If they had cultivated an extensive acquaintance among pothouse voters, of course they must understand the cultivation of potatoes and onions; if they could control half a dozen members of the Legislature in a senatorial contest, why not be able to control Indians, who were not near so difficult to manage? If they could swallow obnoxious measures of the administration, were they not qualified to teach savages how to swallow government provisions? If they were honest enough to avow, in the face of corrupt and hostile factions, that they stood by the constitution and always meant to stand by the same broad platform were they not honest enough to disburse public funds?

In one respect, I think the policy of the government was unfortunate—that is, in the disfavor with which persons of intemperate and disreputable habits were regarded. Men of this kind—and they are not difficult to find in California—could do a great deal toward meliorating the moral condition of the Indians by drinking up all the whisky that might be smuggled on the reservations, and behaving so disreputably in general that no Indian, however degraded, in his propensities, could fail to become ashamed of such low vices.

In accordance with the views of the Department, it was deemed to be consistent with decency that these untutored savages should be clothed in a more becoming costume than Nature had bestowed upon them. Most of them were as ignorant of covering as they were of the Lecompton Constitution. With the exception of a few who had worked for the settlers, they made their first appearance on the reservation very much as they appeared when they first saw daylight.

It was a great object to make them sensible of the advantages of civilization by covering their backs while cultivating their brains. Blankets, shirts, and pantaloons, therefore, were purchased for them in large quantities. It is presumed that when the Department read the vouchers for these articles, and for the potatoes, beans and cattle that were so plentifully sprinkled through the accounts, it imagined that it was "clothing the naked and feeding the hungry."

The blankets, to be sure, were very thin, and cost a great deal of money in proportion to their value;

but then, peculiar advantages were to be derived from the transparency of the fabric. In some respects the worst material might be considered the most economical. By holding his blanket to the light, an Indian could enjoy the contemplation of both sides of it at the same time; and it would only require a little instruction in architecture to enable him to use it occasionally as a window to his wigwam. Every blanket being marked by a number of blotches, he could carry his window on his back whenever he went out on a foraging expedition, so as to know the number of his residence when he returned, as the citiens of Schilda carried their doors when they went away from home, in order that they should not forget where they lived. Nor was it the least important consideration, that when he gambled it away, or sold it for whisky, he would not be subject to any inconvenience from a change of temperature. The shirts and pantaloons were in general equally transparent, and possessed this additional advantage, that they were very soon cracked open in the seams, and thereby enabled the squaws to learn how to sew.

As many of the poor wretches were afflicted with disease incident to their mode of life, and likely to contract others from the white employes of the reservations, physicians were appointed to give them medicine. Of course, Indians required a peculiar mode of treatment. They spoke a barbarous jargon, and it was not possible that any thing but barbarous compounds could operate on their bowels. Of what use would it be to waste good medicines on stomachs that were incapable of comprehending their use? Accordingly, any deficiency in the quality was made up by the quantity and variety. Old drug stores were cleared of their rubbish, and vast quantities of croton oil, saltpetre, alum, paint, scent-bottles, mustard, vinegar, and other valuable laxatives, diphoretics, and condiments were supplied for their use. The result was, that, aided by the peculiar system of diet adopted, the physicians were enabled very soon to show a considerable roll of patients. In cases where the blood was ascertained to be scorbutic, the patients were allowed to go out in the valleys, and subsist for a few months on clover or grass, which was regarded as a sovereign remedy. I was assured at one reservation that fresh spring grass had a more beneficial effect on them than the medicines, as it generally purged them. The Department was fully advised of these facts in elaborate reports made by its special emissaries, and congratulated itself upon the satisfactory progress of the system. The elections were going on all right—the country was safe. Feeding Indians on grass was advancing them at least one step toward a knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. It was following the time-honored precedent

of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, who was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and was wet with the dews of heaven till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. An ounce of croton oil would go a great way in lubricating the intestines of an entire tribe of Indians; and if the paint could not be strictly classed with any of the medicines known in the official dispensary, it might at least be used for purposes of clothing during the summer months. Red or green pantaloons painted on the legs of the Indians, and striped blue shirts artistically marked out on their bodies, would be at once cool, economical and picturesque. If these things cost a great deal of money, as appeared by the vouchers, it was a consolation to know that, money being the root of all evil, no injurious effects could grow out of such a root after it had been once thoroughly eradicated.

The Indians were also taught the advantages to be derived from the cultivation of the earth. Large supplies of potatoes were purchased in San Francisco at about double what they were worth in the vicinity of the reservations. There were only twenty-five thousand acres of public land available at each place for the growth of potatoes or other esculent for which the hungry natives might have a preference; but it was much easier to purchase potatoes than to make farmers out of the white men employed to teach them how to cultivate the earth. Sixteen or seventeen men on each reservation had about as much as they could do to attend to their own private claims, and keep the natives from eating their private crops. It was not the policy of government to reward its friends for their "adhesion to the Constitution" by requiring them to perform any practical labor at seventy-five or a hundred dollars a month, which was scarcely double the current wages of the day. Good men could obtain employment anywhere by working for their wages; but it required the best kind of administration men to earn extraordinary compensation by an extraordinary amount of idleness. Not that they were all absolutely worthless. On the contrary, some spent their time in hunting, others in riding about the country, and a considerable number in laying out and supervising private claims, aided by Indian labor and government provisions.

The official reports transmitted to Congress from time to time gave flattering accounts of the progress of the system. The extent and variety of the crops were fabulously grand. Immense numbers of Indians were fed and clothed—on paper. Like little children who cry for medicine, it would appear that the whole red race were so charmed with the new schools of industry that they were weeping to be removed there and set to work. Indeed, many of them had already learned to work "like white men,"

they were bending to it cheerfully, and could handle the plow and the sickle very skilfully, casting away their bows and arrows, and adopting the more effective instruments of agriculture. No mention was made of the fact that these working Indians had acquired their knowledge from the settlers, and that, if they worked after the fashion of the white men on the reservations, it was rarely any of them were obliged to go to the hospital in consequence of injuries resulting to the spinal column. The favorite prediction of the officers in charge was, that in a very short time these institutions would be self-sustaining—that is to say, that neither they nor the Indians would want any more money after a while.

It may seem strange that the appropriations demanded of Congress did not decrease in a ratio commensurate with these flattering reports. The self-sustaining period had not yet come. On the contrary, as the Indians were advancing into the higher branches of education—music, dancing, and the fine arts, moral philosophy and ethics, political economy, etc.—it required more money to teach them. The number had been considerably diminished by death and desertion; but then their appetites had improved, and they were getting a great deal smarter. Besides, politics were becoming sadly entangled in the state, and many agents had to be employed in the principal cities to protect the women and children from any sudden invasion of the natives while the patriotic male citizens were at the polls depositing their votes.

The Department, no doubt, esteemed all this to be a close approximation to the Spanish Mission system, and in some respects it was. The priests sought the conversion of heathens, who believed neither in the Divinity nor the Holy Ghost; the Department the conversion of infidels, who had no faith in the measures of the administration. If there was any material difference, it was in the head of the Church, and the missionaries appointed to carry its views into effect.

But the most extraordinary feature in the history of this service in California was the interpretation given by the federal authorities in Washington to the Independent Treasury Act of 1846. That stringent provision, prohibiting any public officer from using for private purposes, loaning, or depositing in any bank or banking institution any public funds committed to his charge; transmitting for settlement any voucher for a greater amount than that actually paid; or appropriating such funds to any other purpose than that prescribed by law, was so amended in the construction of the Department as to mean, "except in such cases where such officer has rendered peculiar services to the party and possesses strong influences in Congress." When any infraction of the

law was reported, it was subject to the test of this amended reading: and if the conditions were found satisfactory, the matter was disposed of in a pigeonhole. An adroit system of accountability was established, by which no property return, abstract of issues, account current, or voucher, was understood to mean that it expressed upon its face, so that no accounting officer possessing a clew to the policy adopted could be deceived by the figures. Thus it was perfectly well understood that five hundred or a thousand head of cattle did not necessarily mean real cattle with horns, legs and tails, actually born in the usual course of nature, purchased for money, and delivered on the reservations, but prospective cattle, that might come into existence and be wanted at some future period. For all the good the Indians got out of them, it might as well be five hundred or a thousand head of voters, for they no more fed upon beef, as a general thing, than they did upon human flesh.

Neither was it beyond the capacity of the Department to comprehend that traveling expenses on special Indian service might just as well mean a trip to the Convention at Sacramento; that guides and assistants were a very indefinite class of gentlemen of roving turn of mind; that expenses incurred in visiting wild tribes and settling difficulties among them did not necessarily involve the exclusion of difficulties among the party factions in the Legislature. In short, the original purpose of language was so perverted in the official correspondence that it had no more to do with the expression of facts than many of the employes had to do with the Indians. The reports and regulations of the Department actually bordered on the poetical. It was enough to bring tears into the eyes of any feeling man to read the affecting dissertations that were transmitted to Congress on the woes of the Red men, and the labors of the public functionaries to meliorate their unhappy condition. Faith, hope and charity abounded in them. "See what we are doing for these poor children of the forest!" was the burden of the song, in a strain worthy of the most pathetic flights of Mr. Pecksniff; "see how faithful we are to our trusts, and how judiciously we expend the appropriations! Yet they die off in spite of us—wither away as the leaves of the trees in autumn! Let us hope, nevertheless, that the beneficial intentions of Congress may yet be realized. We are the guardians of these unfortunate and defenseless beings; they are our wards; it is our duty to take care of them; we can afford to be liberal, and spend a little more money on them. Through the judicious efforts of our public functionaries, and the moral influences spread around them, there is reason to believe they will yet embrace civilization and Christianity, and become useful members

of society." In accordance with these views, the regulations issued by the Department were of the most stringent character—encouraging economy, industry, and fidelity; holding all agents and employes to a strict accountability; with here and there some intrinsic maxim or morality—all of which, upon being translated, meant that politicians are very smart fellows, and it was not possible for them to humbug one another. "Do your duty to the Indians as far as you can conveniently, and without too great a sacrifice of money; but stand by our friends, and save the party by all means and at all hazards. Verbum sap!" was the practical construction.

When the public clamor called attention to these supposed abuses, and it became necessary to make some effective demonstration of honesty, a special agent was directed to examine into the affairs of the service and report the result. It was particularly enjoined upon him to investigate every complaint affecting the integrity of public officers, collect and transmit the proofs of malfeasance, with his own views in the premises, so that every abuse might be uprooted and cast out of the service. Decency in official conduct must be respected and the public eye regarded! Peremptory measures would be taken to suppress all frauds upon the Treasury. It was the sincere desire of the administration to preserve purity and integrity in the public service.

From mail to mail, during a period of three years, the agent made his reports; piling up proof upon proof, and covering acres of valuable paper with protests and remonstrances against the policy pursued; rack his brains to do his duty faithfully; subjecting himself to newspaper abuse for neglecting it, because no beneficial result was perceptible, and making enemies as a matter of course. Reader, if ever you aspire to official honors, let the fate of that unfortunate agent be a warning to you. He did exactly what he was instructed to do, which was exactly what he was not wanted to do. In order to save time and expense, as well as further loss of money in the various branches of public service upon which he had reported, other agents were sent out to ascertain if he had told the truth; and when they were forced to admit that he had, there was a good deal of trouble in the wigwam of the great chief. Not only did poor Yorick incur the hostility of powerful senatorial influences, but by persevering in his error, and insisting that he had told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he eventually lost the respect and confidence of the "powers that be," together with his official head. I knew him well. He was a fellow of infinite jest. There was something so exquisitely comic in the idea of taking official instruction literally, and carrying them into

effect, that he could not resist it. The humor of the thing kept him in a constant chuckle of internal satisfaction; but it was the most serious jest he ever perpetrated, for it cost him, besides the trouble of carrying it out, the loss of a very comfortable per diem.

The results of the policy pursued were precisely such as might have been expected. A very large amount of money was annually expended in feeding white men and starving Indians. Such of the latter as were physically able took advantage of the tickets-of-leave granted them so freely, and left. Very few ever remained at these benevolent institutions when there was a possibility of getting any thing to eat in the woods. Every year numbers of them perished from neglect and disease, and some from absolute starvation. When it was represented in the official reports that two or three thousand enjoyed the benefit of aid from government within the limits of each district—conveying the idea that they were fed and clothed at public expense—it must have meant that the Territory of California originally cost the United States fifteen millions of dollars, and that the nuts and berries upon which the Indians subsisted, and the fig-leaves in which they were supposed to be clothed, were embraced within the cessions made by Mexico. At all events, it invariably happened, when a visitor appeared on the reservations, that the Indians were "out in the mountains gathering nuts and berries." This was the case in the spring, summer, autumn, and winter. They certainly possessed a remarkable predilection for staying out a long time. Very few of them, indeed, have yet come back. The only difference between the existing state of things and that which existed prior to the inauguration of the system is, that there were then some thousands of Indians living within the limits of the districts set apart for reservation purposes, whereas there are now only some hundreds. In the brief period of six years they have been nearly destroyed by the generosity of government. What neglect, starvation, and disease have not done, has been achieved by the co-operation of the white settlers in the great work of extermination.

No pretext has been wanted, no opportunity lost, whenever it has been deemed necessary to get them out of the way. At Nome Cult Valley, during the winter of 1858-59, more than a hundred and fifty peaceable Indians, including women and children, were cruelly slaughtered by the whites who had settled there under official authority, and most of whom derived their support either from actual or indirect connection with the reservation. Many of them had been in public employ, and now enjoyed the rewards of their meritorious services. True, a notice was posted up on the trees that the valley was public land reserved for Indian purposes, and not open to

settlement; but nobody, either in or out of the service, paid any attention to that, as a matter of course. When the Indians were informed that it was their home, and were invited there on the pretext that they would be protected, it was very well understood that, as soon as the government had spent enough money there to build a settlement sufficiently strong to maintain itself, they would enjoy very slender chances of protection. It was alleged that they had driven off and eaten private cattle. There were some three or four hundred head of public cattle on the property returns, all supposed to be ranging in the same vicinity; but the private cattle must have been a great deal better, owing to some superior capacity for eating grass. Upon an investigation of this charge, made by the officers of the army, it was found to be entirely destitute of truth. A few cattle had been lost, or probably killed by white men, and this was the whole basis of the massacre. Armed parties went into the rancherias in open day, when no evil was apprehended, and shot the Indians down—weak, harmless, and defenseless as they were—without distinction of age or sex; shot down women with sucking infants at their breasts; killed or crippled the naked children that were running about; and after they had achieved this brave exploit, appealed to the state government for aid! Oh, Shame, Shame, where is thy blush, that white men should do this with impunity in a civilized country, under the very eyes of an enlightened government! They did it, and they did more! For days, weeks, and months they ranged the hills of Nome Cult, killing every Indian that was too weak to escape; and, what is worse, they did it under a state commission, which in all charity I must believe was issued upon false representations. A more cruel series of outrages than those perpetrated upon the poor Indians of Nome Cult never disgraced a community of white men. The state said the settlers must be protected, and it protected them—protected them from women and children, for the men are too imbecile and too abject to fight. The general government folded its arms and said, "What can we do? We cannot chastise the citizens of a state. Are we not feeding and clothing the savages, and teaching them to be moral, and is not that as much as the civilized world can ask of us?"

At King's River, where there was a public farm maintained at considerable expense, the Indians were collected in a body of two or three hundred, and the white settlers, who complained that government would not do anything for them, drove them over to the Agency at the Fresno. After an expenditure of some thirty thousand dollars a year for six years, that farm had scarcely produced six blades of grass, and was entirely unable to support over a few dozen

Indians who had always lived there, and who generally foraged for their own subsistence. The newcomers, therefore, stood a poor chance till the agent purchased from the white settlers, on public account, the acorns which they (the Indians) had gathered and laid up for winter use at King's River. Notwithstanding the acorns, they were very soon starved out at the Fresno, and wandered away to find a subsistence wherever they could. Many of them perished of hunger on the plains of the San Joaquin. The rest are presumed to be in the mountains gathering berries.

At the Mattole Station, near Cape Mendocino, a number of Indians were murdered on the public farm within a few hundred yards of the headquarters. The settlers in the valley alleged that government would not support them or take any care of them; and as settlers were not paid for doing it, they must kill them to get rid of them.

At Humboldt Bay, and in the vicinity, a series of Indian massacres by white men continued for over two years. The citizens held public meetings, and protested against the action of the general government in leaving these Indians to prowl upon them for support. It was alleged that the reservations cost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, and yet nothing was done to relieve the people of this burden. Petitions were finally sent to the state authorities asking for the removal of the Indians from that vicinity; and the state sent out its militia, killed a good many, and captured a good many others, who were finally carried down to the Mendocino reservation. They liked that place so well that they left it very soon, and went back to their old places of resort, preferring a chance of life to the certainty of starvation. During the winter of last year a number of them were gathered at Humboldt. The whites thought it was a favorable opportunity to get rid of them altogether. So they went in a body to the Indian camp, during the night when the poor wretches were asleep, shot all the men, women and children they could at first onslaught, and cut the throats of the remainder. Very few escaped. Next morning sixty bodies lay weltering in their blood—the old and the young, male and female—with every wound gaping a tale of horror to the civilized world. Children climbed upon their mother's breasts, and sought nourishment from the fountains that death had drained; girls and boys lay here and there with their throats cut from ear to ear; men and women, clinging to each other in their terror, were found perforated with bullets or cut to pieces with knives—all were cruelly murdered! Let any one who doubts this read the newspapers of San Francisco of that date. It will be found there in its most bloody and tragic details. Let them read of

the Pitt River massacre, and of all the massacres that for the past three years have darkened the records of the state.

It will do the white people who were engaged in these massacres the justice to say that they were not so much to blame as the general government. They had at least given due warning of their intention. For years they had burdened the mails with complaints of the inefficiency of the agents; they had protested in the newspapers, in public meetings, in every conceivable way, and on every possible occasion, against the impolicy of permitting these Indians to roam about the settlements, picking up a subsistence in whatever way they could, when there was a fund of $250,000 a year appropriated by Congress for their removal to and support on the reservations What were these establishments for? Why did they not take charge of the Indians? Where were the agents? What was done with the money? It was repeatedly represented that, unless something was done, the Indians would soon all be killed. They could no longer make a subsistence in their old haunts. The progress of settlement had driven them from place to place till there was no longer a spot on earth they could call their own. Their next move could only be into the Pacific Ocean. If ever an unfortunate people needed a few acres of ground to stand upon, and the poor privilege of making a living for themselves, it was these hapless Diggers. As often as they tried the reservations, sad experience taught them that these were institutions for the benefit of white men, not Indians. It was wonderful how the employes had prospered on their salaries. They owned fine ranches in the vicinity; in fact, the reservations themselves were pretty much covered with the claims of persons in the service, who thought they would make nice farms for white men. The principal work done was to attend to sheep and cattle speculations, and make shepherds out of the few Indians that were left.

What did it signify that thirty thousand dollars a year had been expended at the Tejon? thirty thousand at the Fresno? fifty thousand at Nome Lackee? ten thousand at Nome Cult? forty-eight thousand at Mendocino? sixteen thousand at the Klamath? and some fifty to sixty thousand for miscellaneous purposes? that all this had resulted in the reduction of a hundred thousand Indians to about thirty thousand? Meritorious services had been rewarded, and a premium in favor of public integrity issued to an admiring world.

I am satisfied, from an acquaintance of eleven years with the Indians of California, that, had the least care been taken of them, these disgraceful massacres would never have occurred. A more inoffen-

sive and harmless race of beings does not exist on the face of the earth; but, wherever they attempted to procure a subsistence, they were hunted down; driven from the reservations by the instinct of self-preservation; shot down by the settlers upon the most frivolous pretexts; and abandoned to their fate by the only power that could have afforded them protection.

This was the result, in plain terms, of the inefficient and discreditable manner in which public affairs were administered by the federal authorities in Washington. It was the natural consequences of a corrupt political system, which, for the credit of humanity, it is to be hoped will be abandoned in future so far as the Indians are concerned. They have no voice in public affairs. So long as they are permitted to exist, party discipline is a matter of very little moment to them. All they ask is the privilege of breathing the air that God gave to us all, and living in peace wherever it may be convenient to remove them. Their history in California is a melancholy record of neglect and cruelty and the part taken by public men high in position, in wresting from them the very means of subsistence, is one of which any other than professional politicians would be ashamed. For the Executive Department there is no excuse. There lay the power and the remedy; but a paltry and servile spirit, an abject submission to every shifting influence, an utter absense of that hig moral tone which is the characteristic trait of genu ine statesmen and patriots, have been the distinguish ing features of this branch of our government fo some time past. Disgusted with their own handi-work; involved in debt throughout the state, after wasting all the money appropriated by Congress; the accounts in an inextricable state of confusion; the creditros of the government clamoring to be paid; the "honest yeomanry" turning against the party in power; political affairs entangled beyond remedy; it was admitted to be a very bad business—not at all such as to meet the approval of the administration. The appropriation was cut down to fifty thousand dollars. That would do damage enough. Two hundred and fifty thousand a year, for six or seven years, had inflicted sufficient injury upon the poor Indians. Now it was time to let them alone on fifty thousand, or turn them over to the state. So the end of it is, that the reservations are practically abandoned; the remainder of the Indians are being exterminated every day; and the Spanish Mission System has signally failed.

## THE WORD OF A WITNESS

Alameda, California

My Dear Miss Hathaway:

I hasten to thank you for this copy of J. Ross Browne's satire. It has been kept for *service now.*

My parents were pioneer Californians and California, then, had not many, if any, other writers of Browne's calibre, so his writings were the intellectual tid-bits of my girlhood. In this paper he handles the truth with sledge hammer blows and his satire like a Damascus blade. I can testify to its truth. One of my brothers saw the official Survey of the Round Valley. When the Indians were sent there he went to see whether they got it, because it was fairly good land. All that land *had been promptly seized by white men,* the land given the Indians being a barren region of steep mountains nearly inaccessible until within the last few years.

My father's home was probably the only one south of Eel River that was not notified and its *men invited to take part in the massacre* on Indian Island and two others near the coast on the same night, Feb. 26, 1860. Pardon reminiscenses. I know whereof I speak. I later served as Superintendent of work among Indians in the National W. C. T. U. nearly twenty years. By the end of that time I had learned that the Indians of no other state were as poor and neglected as ours.

Very truly yours,

Dorcas J. Spencer

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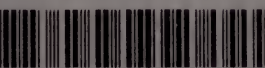

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